

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF THE UNITED STATES
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF ALABAMA
SOUTHERN DIVISION

RONALD DEVONE BALCOM,)	
AIS #158439,)	
)	
Plaintiff,)	
)	
v.)	CASE NO. 1:19-CV-264-WHA
)	
DONALD VALENZA, et al.,)	
)	
Defendants.)	

RECOMMENDATION OF THE MAGISTRATE JUDGE

I. INTRODUCTION

This 42 U.S.C. § 1983 action is before the court on a complaint filed by Ronald Devone Balcom, a frequent federal litigant who is presently incarcerated at the Houston County Jail. In the instant complaint, Balcom alleges that “there are rats, roaches, and snakes in the storage room, rats have eaten in [loafs] of bread [and are in the peanut butter.] . . . In the middle of the serving island is rat infested, the kitchen smells. Bread has to be thrown away because rats have eat[en] it. . . . [T]here is mold and mildew everywhere.” Doc. 1 at 1. He complains that despite these conditions, “the Health Department gives the Jail a 97” in an effort to “cover[] up for the Jail.” Doc. 1 at 3.

II. DISCUSSION

Upon initiation of this case, Balcom filed a motion for leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a). Doc. 2. However, 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g) directs that a

prisoner is not allowed to bring a civil action or proceed on appeal *in forma pauperis* if he “has, on 3 or more occasions, while incarcerated or detained in any facility, brought an action or appeal in a court of the United States that was dismissed on the grounds that it is frivolous, malicious, or fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, unless the prisoner is under imminent danger of serious physical injury.”¹ Consequently, an inmate in violation of the “three strikes” provision of § 1915(g) who is not in “imminent danger” of suffering a “serious physical injury” at the time he filed the complaint must pay the filing fee upon initiation of his case. *Dupree v. Palmer*, 284 F.3d 1234, 1236 (11th Cir. 2002). “The prisoner cannot simply pay the filing fee after being denied *in forma pauperis* status.” *Id.*

The records of this court establish that Balcom, while incarcerated or detained, has on three occasions had civil actions summarily dismissed pursuant to the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i) as frivolous or malicious. The actions on which this court relies in finding a § 1915(g) violation by Balcom are as follows: (1) *Balcom v. Blumenfeld, et al.*, Case No. 1:09-CV-814-TMH-WC (M.D. Ala. Sept. 30, 2009) (complaint frivolous);

¹In *Rivera v. Allin*, 144 F.3d 719, 731, *cert. denied*, 524 U.S. 978, 119 S.Ct. 27 (1998), the Court determined that the “three strikes” provision of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g), which requires frequent filer prisoner indigents to prepay the entire filing fee before federal courts may consider their cases and appeals, “does not violate the First Amendment right to access the courts; the separation of judicial and legislative powers; the Fifth Amendment right to due process of law; or the Fourteenth Amendment right to equal protection, as incorporated through the Fifth Amendment.” The Court further determined that the language of § 1915(g) makes it clear that the three strikes provision applies to claims dismissed prior to the effective date of the PLRA and, therefore, does not violate the Ex Post Facto Clause. *Id.* at 728–30; *Medberry v. Butler*, 185 F.3d 1189, 1192 (11th Cir. 1999). In *Jones v. Bock*, 549 U.S. 199, 216 (2007), the Supreme Court abrogated *Rivera* but only to the extent it compelled an inmate to plead exhaustion of remedies in his complaint as “failure to exhaust is an affirmative defense under the PLRA . . . and inmates are not required to specifically plead or demonstrate exhaustion in their complaints.”

(2) *Balcom v. Valenza, et al.*, Case No. 1:19-CV-132-WHA-CSC (M.D. Ala. Mar. 18, 2019) (complaint malicious); and (3) *Balcom v. Culver, et al.*, Case No. 1:19-CV-141-WHA-CSC (M.D. Ala. Mar. 18, 2019) (complaint malicious).

Since Balcom has three strikes, he may not proceed *in forma pauperis* in this case unless the claims raised in the complaint demonstrate that he was “under imminent danger of serious physical injury” upon initiation of this case. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g). In determining whether a plaintiff satisfies this burden, “the issue is whether his complaint, as a whole, alleges imminent danger of serious physical injury.” *Brown v. Johnson*, 387 F.3d 1344, 1350 (11th Cir. 2004). “A plaintiff must provide the court with specific allegations of ***present imminent danger*** indicating that a serious physical injury will result if his claims are not addressed.” *Abdullah v. Migoya*, 955 F. Supp.2d 1300, 1307 (S.D. Fla. 2013)) (emphasis added); *May v. Myers*, 2014 WL 3428930, at *2 (S.D. Ala. July 15, 2014) (holding that, to meet the exception to application of § 1915(g)’s three strikes bar, the facts contained in the complaint must show that the plaintiff “was under ‘imminent danger of serious physical injury’ at the time he filed this action.”); *Lewis v. Sullivan*, 279 F.3d 526, 531 (7th Cir. 2002) (holding that imminent danger exception to § 1915(g)’s three strikes rule is construed narrowly and available only “for genuine emergencies,” where “time is pressing” and “a threat . . . is real and proximate.”).

Upon a thorough review of the complaint, the court finds that the claims set forth therein do not allege nor in any way indicate Balcom was “under imminent danger of

serious physical injury” at the time of filing this cause of action as is required to meet the exception allowing circumvention of the directives contained in 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g). *Medberry v. Butler*, 185 F.3d 1189, 1193 (11th Cir. 1999) (holding that a prisoner who has filed three or more frivolous lawsuits or appeals and seeks to proceed *in forma pauperis* must present facts sufficient to demonstrate “imminent danger of serious physical injury” to circumvent application of the “three strikes” provision of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g)).

Based on the foregoing analysis, the court concludes that this case is due to be summarily dismissed without prejudice as Balcom failed to pay the requisite filing fee upon the initiation of this case. *Dupree*, 284 F.3d at 1236 (emphasis in original) (“[T]he proper procedure is for the district court to dismiss the complaint without prejudice when it denies the prisoner leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* pursuant to the provisions of § 1915(g)” because the prisoner “must pay the filing fee at the time he *initiates* the suit.”); *Vanderberg v. Donaldson*, 259 F.3d 1321, 1324 (11th Cir. 2001) (holding that “[a]fter the third meritless [and/or malicious] suit, the prisoner must pay the full filing fee at the time he initiates the suit.”).

III. CONCLUSION

Accordingly, it is the RECOMMENDATION of the Magistrate Judge that:

1. The motion for leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* filed by Ronald Devone Balcom (Doc. 2) be DENIED.

2. This case be DISMISSED without prejudice for Balcom's failure to pay the full filing fee upon the initiation of this case.

On or before **April 26, 2019**, the plaintiff may file objections to the Recommendation. The plaintiff must specifically identify the factual findings and legal conclusions in the Recommendation to which objection is made. Frivolous, conclusive, or general objections will not be considered.

Failure to file written objections to the Magistrate Judge's findings and recommendations in accordance with the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1) shall bar a party from a de novo determination by the District Court of legal and factual issues covered in the Recommendation and waives the right of the party to challenge on appeal the District Court's order based on unobjected-to factual and legal conclusions accepted or adopted by the District Court except upon grounds of plain error or manifest injustice. 11TH Cir. R. 3-1; *see Resolution Trust Co. v. Hallmark Builders, Inc.*, 996 F.2d 1144, 1149 (11th Cir. 1993); *Henley v. Johnson*, 885 F.2d 790, 794 (11th Cir. 1989).

DONE this 12th day of April, 2019.

/s/ Charles S. Coody

UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE